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KEEP THE LAW OUT OF THE BEDROOM

Laura Newman

They're baffling. They're astounding. And they're often outright intrusive and unnecessary. Each state has its own unique set of sex laws that criminalize private consensual acts between adults. The government has bizarre jurisdiction over what you do in the sack; so don't get caught with your pants down.

Most recently, the Georgia Supreme Court overturned a 170-year-old law that made it a crime for unmarried people to have sex. The case involved a 16-year-old boy who was caught having sex with his girlfriend in the bedroom of her home. After an initial conviction, the boy was ordered to pay a fine and write an essay to the court on why he shouldn't have had sex.

Although Georgia came to its senses and struck down this ruling, similar fornication laws still remain in Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, South Carolina, Utah, West Virginia, and Washington D.C.

Fornication laws are not the only way that the government is violating your right to sexual privacy. In Texas and Georgia you can receive a fine of up to \$10,000 for the heinous crime of (gasp!) selling or using sexual toys and devices. Georgia contends, "Any device designed or marketed as useful primarily for the stimulation of human genital organs is obscene," and is considered a "misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature." Apparently Georgia is protecting its citizens from the dreaded dangers of dildos.

In Louisiana and Virginia, you face felony charges and up to five years in prison if caught engaging in "unnatural carnal copulation" (oral sex).

Washington D.C. outlaws consensual oral sex, as well. So does that mean that if you live at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. and engage in oral sex, you are committing a crime? Hmmm.

Every U.S. state has a law prohibiting sex with animals except Wyoming. I'll let you draw your own conclusions, but I think it has something to do with isolation and long winters.

Although these laws are often so peculiar they are funny, they highlight a more serious issue—the government should not be able to reach into our bedrooms and criminalize the actions of people legally capable of consenting to those acts.

It is a gross invasion of personal privacy. Perhaps these criminal sex laws are laxly enforced, but they can have civil repercussions. Some courts have restricted the civil rights of unmarried cohabitants citing fornication laws. In Minnesota, unmarried couples were denied fair housing because of this loophole.

I'm certainly not contending that all sex laws are useless and invasive. Statutes that protect children, for instance, are extremely important. However, laws that criminalize and punish acts of love (or lust) have no place in a modern free society. These laws do not protect anyone and certainly do not improve anyone's quality of life. Their sole purpose is to impose intangible, moralistic mumbo jumbo and discriminate against people who have made alternative life choices. Until each state's unnecessary sex laws are overturned, keep your blinds drawn and your sex toys hidden. 